Anaplasmosis in Goats?

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I attempt to respond to the issues and concerns raised by our clientele in order to meet their needs and herd health programs. When I was asked about the potential for anaplasmosis affecting goat herds in Florida, I decided to research the issue to make sure the information was creditable. As a background, Anaplasmosis, formerly known as gall sickness, is a disease of ruminants caused by an intracellular parasite. Cattle, sheep, goats, deer, antelopes may be infected. Anaplasmosis is an infectious disease that is characterized by progressive anemia due to destruction of red blood cells. It is found in sheep and cattle in the United States but no natural infection has been reported in goats. In countries where it does occur it presents as a sub-clinical infection and may contribute to abortions in pregnant does. It is transmitted by blood sucking insects and arthropods such as 19 species of ticks, mosquitoes, and flies. The organisms can be mechanically transmitted by procedures such as dehorning, castrating, vaccinating, and ear-tagging.

The symptoms that occur with anaplasmosis are usually subclinical, but clinical manifestations may be triggered by malnutrition and other stress conditions such as parasitism. The most consistent findings include inability to exercise, fever up to 107 degrees F, depression, weakness, pale mucous membranes, difficulty breathing, and increased heart rate. The only way to accurately diagnose anaplasmosis requires laboratory confirmation.

Early and aggressive intervention is the best treatment for anaplasmosis. The drug of choice is oxytetracycline and tetracycline hydrochloride given intramuscularly for 3 to 5 days. It is best to consult with the veterinarian for correct dosage and management of a positive anaplasma goat. Control of vectors seems to be of limited value in controlling the spread of anaplasmosis. There may be some value to dipping or spraying for insect vectors. There is no vaccine available, but prophylactic administration of tetracycline is regarded as the measure of choice in areas where there is an outbreak.

Let me repeat again, there has been no known natural infection in goats in the US or in Florida. Producers should be aware of the ability of the organism to infect goats and should use sound purchasing and marketing strategies. At all times, animals should be purchased from reputable sources, and always use good quality assurance and bio-security measures. These include management of needles and administration of injectables, control of parasites, good animal health practices, isolation and quarantine of infected animals and always consultation with the local, state or federal veterinarians regarding any suspicious or unusual condition on your or surrounding farm. Please contact Dr. Mobley or the animal health staff at (850) 599-3546 or ray.mobley@famu.edu.
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